



*SRA Guidance Series*

20¢

# Your behavior problems

by

O. SPURGEON ENGLISH, M.D. and CONSTANCE J. FOSTER



## ***SRA Guidance Series***

. . . to help young people solve the problems of everyday living

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### **Are you having behavior problems?**

Do you often lose your temper?

Do you sulk in a corner when things don't go your way?

Are you frequently in hot water with your family?

Do you balk when someone tells you what to do?

You, like many young people, may answer yes to these questions. For adolescence is a time of ups and downs, of violent feelings, and of strong desires for freedom. As a result, many teen-agers have behavior problems. These are not usually serious, but they do make life uncomfortable and cause a good deal of friction.

However, you can do something about your behavior problems. No one forces you to fly off the handle or feel depressed or get into trouble with your parents. You choose your behavior. So if you find that your actions are making you unhappy and are preventing you from getting the things you want out of life, you can change. By understanding why you feel and act the way you do, you can begin to take steps to improve your behavior. This booklet will show you how.

# Your behavior problems



by

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## Table of contents

<b>I You choose your behavior.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Your behavior equals <i>you</i> —Getting what you want—What about the rest of the world?—The happy years—Checklist—You can do better	
<b>II Why we misbehave.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Your infant self—Feelings that go back—Parents can make mistakes—Troubling physical changes—New horizons—Proving yourself—Understanding comes first—It can't be done in ten lessons	
<b>III Changing your behavior.....</b>	<b>17</b>
Can you spare 60 seconds?—Be an efficiency expert—More basic methods of changing behavior—Talk out your troubles—Consult an expert	
<b>IV You and your moods.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Facing your problems—Your new needs—Put on an act—Practice makes perfect—Losing your temper—Some tips	
<b>V Are you a chameleon?.....</b>	<b>32</b>
Going along with the crowd—Standing on your own feet—What you owe to yourself—"Have you <i>heard</i> what they're saying?"	
<b>VI The teen-age rebellion.....</b>	<b>38</b>
Stop lights protect you—The clash—Rules can help you—See things in perspective	
<b>VII Are you a skillful driver?.....</b>	<b>43</b>
"Inside-Henry trouble"—Using your emotions wisely—Will power isn't enough—The past in the present—Alibis—Happy days ahead	
<b>For more information.....</b>	<b>49</b>





## You choose your behavior

**N**OW be good and *behave yourself!* How often did you hear this plea from your parents when you were a child? You probably heard it frequently, for part of growing up is learning to behave.

Now that you have passed the childhood stage, you no longer need constant reminders to "behave." You know quite well what you should and shouldn't do.

Most of the time you probably don't have much trouble doing what's expected of you. You remember to count to ten when your temper flares, give others the benefit of the doubt when disagreements come up, and even make allowances for the peculiarities of parents.

But you're only human. Like everyone else, you misbehave now and then. Few people are entitled to wear halos. Perfect individuals do not exist outside of books and movies. All of us are likely at times to be untidy, lazy, irresponsible, sulky, angry, unfair, uncooperative, critical, gossipy, or behave in other ways that keep us from being on good terms with ourselves, our family and friends, or the world in general.

The encouraging thing is that although we slip up from time to time, all of us want to do and be better. While we can't always help acting the way we do when things don't suit us, we are seldom satisfied with a poor performance. We all have an earnest desire to improve ourselves.

### It's not easy

Sometimes it's really difficult to act as we know we should. Our head tells us to do one thing but our hurt feelings or angry emotions disregard all such directions. Just telling ourselves to stop misbehaving isn't enough in some situations. If it were, our problems would be much simpler.

It takes more than will power and good intentions to overcome our faults. We need to have an understanding of ourselves and the deep-down causes of our actions. Instead of condemning ourselves for our mistakes, we often need to forgive ourselves in order to do better. People who expect too much of themselves, who try too hard for perfection, often have as much trouble with their behavior as those who expect too little.

### **Your behavior equals you**

One of the most important things to understand is that behavior is never *forced* on you. You choose it for yourself. Nobody can *make* you angry, or critical, or impatient, or lazy, or insolent, or sullen. You—and you alone—are the one who is responsible. This is an encouraging fact. It means that there is always a chance for you to *change* your actions. For example, if you're constantly flying off the handle when things bother you, you can try to find a more constructive way of meeting such situations. If one method doesn't work, you can always try another.

It doesn't always seem as if you have the say about how you'll behave. You may insist, for instance, "He *made* me mad." But that isn't really accurate. What you mean is that the other person said or did something that displeased you. So you reacted by *getting* angry. But the choice was up to you. You could just as well have reacted by being amused at the other person's lack of sound reasoning, or tolerant of his shortcomings, or interested in setting him straight on the facts.

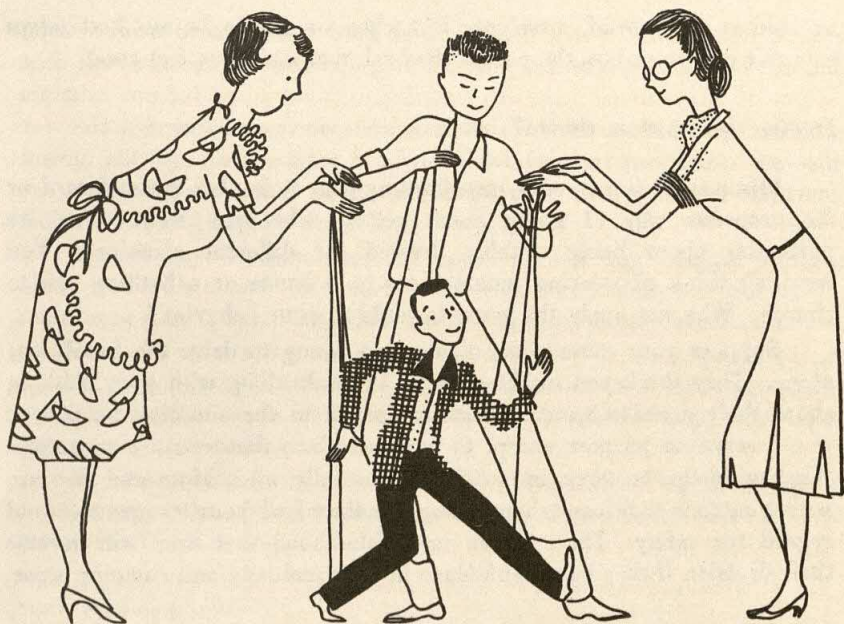
If you're honest with yourself, you can't blame others for your conduct. You would be acting like the small boy who stumbled on a ladder and fell, knocking his sister off a lower rung at the same time. When they both landed on the ground with a loud thud, he picked himself up and said accusingly, "Now see what you made me do!"

### **"Everything happens to me"**

You may feel that *you're* all right and would get into no trouble at all if it weren't for the things that *happen* to you. Many things do seem to go wrong through no fault of your own. A shoelace breaks when you're already late for school, a rainy day spoils the plans for a picnic, or your brother borrows your best sport shirt and spills ink all over it.

But even when you sing the "everything happens to *me*" theme song on a particularly difficult day, it's good to know that you are still the boss of your own conduct. Tempting as it is to get irked and upset, you *can* decide to laugh off your mishaps. It's a good feeling to know that you have free choice about your behavior and aren't just a puppet on strings





**You're not a puppet manipulated by others; you can *choose* your behavior.**

for others to manipulate. It means that you don't *have* to act in unsatisfactory ways. No matter how many mistakes you may have made in the past, you can always improve and do better.

### **Getting what you want**

Misconduct, or misbehavior is essentially an *unrewarding* way of doing things. Isn't it true that every time you lose your temper you feel sorry and ashamed afterward? Don't you often wish you could take back that nasty crack or bitter retort you impetuously made? Aren't you displeased with yourself when you duck out of an obligation or fail to keep a promise you have made a friend?

Bill, for example, is always blowing his top and telling people what he thinks of them. Later he feels ashamed and wishes he had kept quiet. Bill knows that people don't like him when he acts like this. And *he* thinks less of himself, too. His bad temper pays no dividends; it's unrewarding. A smile and a tactful manner would probably win him what he wants; a scowl or a growl just makes people dislike him. So Bill is defeating his own ends.

Misbehavior is a sure way to make yourself, as well as others, unhappy. It keeps you from feeling proud of your actions. We all like to

be able to approve of ourselves. But when we fail to be our best selves we can't give ourselves the pat on the back that makes us feel good.

### **Tennis shoes at a dance?**

Misconduct is not only unrewarding, but it is also the *awkward* or *inappropriate* way of going about getting what you want. You are particular about being suitably dressed for different occasions. You wouldn't think of wearing tennis shoes to a dance or a bathing suit to church. Why not apply the same formula to your behavior?

Suppose your parents say you're too young to drive the family car alone. They think you ought to have an adult along with you. Sulking about their decision would be inappropriate to the situation because it would serve no purpose except to convince them that you *are* immature. What *will* help, however, is to drive so carefully when Mom and Dad are with you that they can't help being convinced of your competence and regard for safety. There is far more likelihood that they will reverse their decision if they have confidence in your maturity and common sense.

### **What about the rest of the world?**

Misbehavior is a sign that we are unable to get along smoothly and happily with ourselves and others. It means that we are not running our lives very well. We are out of step. We are trying to do things in a way that others in our society do not approve of.

Society has set up certain aims for all of us to shoot at. These include friendliness, unselfishness, and cooperation with others. When we do things in unacceptable ways, we miss the mark.

Losing your temper, being thoughtless, failing to cooperate or to meet obligations, being tardy—all are essentially forms of self-centeredness. They mean that you are investing most of your interest in You, with little regard for the rest of the world. This may give you some small satisfaction, but actually it cheats you of all the rewards that come from getting along well with others.

### **The happy years**

This period of your life is pretty wonderful, you know. It may seem woeful to you at times. But that's temporary. There are always downs as well as ups. On the whole, opportunities abound for making exciting new discoveries about yourself and other people. You are no longer a child with a child's sense of smallness, dependency, and helplessness. You don't



have to crane your neck to look up at adults. You're now on an eye-level with them and you're beginning to be accepted as a person in your own right.

All your new experiences are stimulating. You are learning, growing, loving, playing, and working in a world that is yours to inherit. To make the most of your opportunities it's important to stop using outgrown, childish ways of getting along.

We all have a deep need for approval and appreciation. Getting along well with others—at home, on the job, and socially—is one of our most important goals. But when we use inappropriate behavior in our relations with others, we fail to reach that goal. On the other hand, we hit the jackpot every time we do things the harmonious, socially acceptable way. We get dividends in the form of job promotions, happy marriages, and satisfying friendships.

So just on the basis of personal advantage, behaving effectively is much smarter than being unpleasant or hard to get along with. We get more out of life.

### How about you?

How is your behavior? Is your life fairly smooth? Do you get along with other people? Check yourself on the list below. Put a check in the box opposite each statement to which you can honestly answer yes.

1. I often get angry and blow up at someone. ☐
2. I frequently get up on the wrong side of the bed and am grouchy all day. ☐
3. When Mom asks me to do something, I often conveniently neglect to do it. ☐
4. I get sore at Dad because I resent being scolded for staying out too late on a date. ☐
5. I enjoy speeding in the family car when I'm sure that no traffic policeman is following me. ☐
6. I feel pleased when I get away with doing something forbidden like smoking or taking a beer. ☐
7. It infuriates me to be bossed or told what I should do. ☐
8. I often repeat rumors about people. ☐
9. When I feel angry or upset, I sometimes take it out on others. ☐

10. I often tease or pick on my brother (or sister). ☐
11. Occasionally I do or say something of which I don't really approve in order to go along with the gang. ☐
12. I am quite often moody or depressed—and show it. ☐
13. My family frequently complains that I'm thoughtless and inconsiderate. ☐
14. I don't like to make myself conspicuous so I keep quiet when the gang criticizes people I like. ☐
15. Sometimes I'm rude. ☐
16. If I'm going to be late for dinner, I don't usually bother to phone home or let my parents know where I am. ☐
17. I get out of helping around the house all I can. ☐
18. I watch television or talk on the phone when I should be doing homework. ☐
19. I'm often late for dates and appointments. ☐
20. I'm apt to leave my clothes lying around and my room untidy. ☐

### You can do better

How did you come out? If you had to check no more than five or six statements on the list, you're doing very well. But even if you had to admit to many of these common failings, there's a great deal you can do to improve your behavior.

In this booklet we'll discuss some of the problems that you and other young people have in behaving effectively and to your own best advantage. By facing *your* problems, you can take steps to make yourself all the things you really want to be.



## Why we misbehave

**I**N MANY instances, it's fairly easy for you to choose your behavior—to produce a smile instead of a growl, to be helpful rather than uncooperative. But what about the times when you are spun around by your feelings like a ship in a typhoon? At such crucial moments you can neither understand nor control your conduct. What's behind it all?

### Your infant self

Most behavior trouble is due to the fact that part of you persists in clinging to childish feelings and attitudes that you should have left behind along with rattles and nursing bottles. It is normal for a baby to be entirely wrapped up in himself. It's his business to be selfish. Unless he sets up a big squawk when he's hungry, he might not get fed when he feels it's necessary. The infant is entirely helpless because he can't talk or do things for himself.

But as you grow up you learn that you must *merit* the attention and consideration you expect from others. You have to assume responsibilities, make compromises, learn to be thoughtful, and accept minor disappointments from time to time, if you are to become mature emotionally as well as physically.

The trouble is that part of you—your emotional self—likes to cling to infantile ways so you can stay the center of attention. Thus temper tantrums, unreasonable demands, and crying spells. The rest of you—your physical self—goes on growing. But your feelings often lag behind and remain “stuck” on an immature level.

There is a struggle inside you between the desire to become independent and self-sufficient, and the wish to have your parents protect you from harsh reality and make things easier for you. Half of you longs for

complete freedom to live your own life. But this involves taking on many responsibilities which are not entirely welcome. So the other half of you tries to remain a child. The conflict between these two selves is responsible for many of the behavior problems of the teens.

Just as you can't get into the movies without buying a ticket, so you can't mature until you are willing to pay the entrance price. Perhaps part of your present behavior trouble stems from wanting all the privileges that go with being an adult and yet not wanting to take on any of the burdens.

Ann has that kind of a problem. She feels she is old enough to buy all her own clothes without any supervision. Yet when her father gave her ten dollars for a much-needed pair of shoes, she spent it all on a bracelet that caught her eye. Now she still needs the shoes, and the money is gone. Do you think she demonstrated maturity?

### **Feelings that go back**

Many of your emotions are rooted deep in the past. All of us have had disturbing or unpleasant things happen to us in the long, slow process of growing up. The scars that are left make us supersensitive in certain areas of our thinking and feeling. They are weak chinks in our armor.

Eileen is a good example of what we mean. Recently she went all to pieces because her mother said a new skirt was out of the question; there was no money available. Eileen went into a tailspin. She slammed doors and exploded into angry words. What turned this 16-year-old into a human tornado? The skirt wasn't that important. Eileen's feelings were out of proportion to the situation. Actually, her distress was not just about the skirt; it flashed back a number of years.

When Eileen was small, her father had a serious illness that kept him in the hospital for a long period of time. To help meet the heavy expenses, her mother had to take a job. Naturally Eileen was lonely and often unhappy without either a full-time mother or father. Her parents were sympathetic and tried to make it up to her with frequent gifts and lots of toys. Soon she came to depend on getting "things" as proof that they loved her.

Today her father has recovered and Eileen leads a normal family life. But she is still anxious and frightened when she can't have something on which she has set her heart, like the new skirt. When she was told she couldn't have it, all her childhood fears about her parents' love for her returned. This fear expressed itself in a temper tantrum. Actually it was



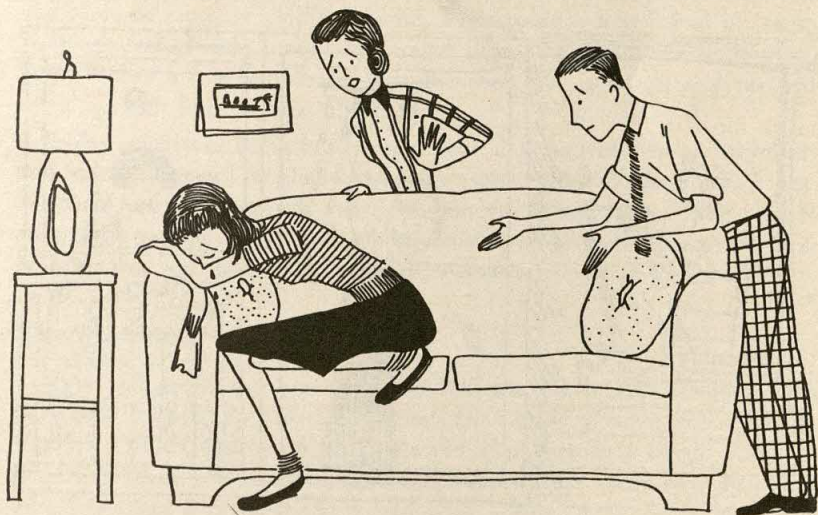
the past that showed up in the present situation which set off an emotional chain reaction and caused Eileen to blow up.

### Parents can make mistakes

All of us have feelings that may have been appropriate in the past, but aren't now. Perhaps when you were a child your mother warned you that if you were a bad boy (or girl) a policeman would come and take you away. This frightened you so much that you started crying every time you saw a blue uniform. Even now, you feel panicky every time an officer of the law approaches.

What can we do about some of these intense feelings that throw us into a cold sweat or cause us to explode angrily? Often we are not aware of the real basis for our feelings. In many cases, if we knew we were reacting to something that happened years ago, we would be able to change our responses. The first and most important thing is to try to get at the real *reason* for our uncontrollable feelings and actions. Once we do that, we can prove to ourselves that the reason for the feeling is long since past. Then we can begin to change our behavior.

Some young people who learn about the emotional scars of the past on their personality are inclined to blame their parents for their problems. And often parents *are* responsible for the difficulties of their children. However, they don't make such mistakes deliberately. They usually do the best they know how with the knowledge at their disposal. It's also



**Blaming your parents for all your problems doesn't help you to solve them.**

important to remember that they too had parents who may have made mistakes.

Often a childhood experience can be upsetting to a child because he is too young to understand it. Eileen, for instance, has always been loved very much by her parents. But because her mother was worried and under a strain when Eileen's father was ill, she failed to show Eileen enough attention and affection. Naturally a young child couldn't understand all this, so Eileen assumed that for some reason her parents didn't care about her. If Eileen could now understand the reasons for her past feelings, her need to have temper tantrums when she was crossed would disappear.

Blaming our parents for not making our lives happier isn't going to accomplish anything. It won't solve our problems. The only thing that will help is to try to understand ourselves as best we can, and then make an attempt to change.

### Some work or all play?

Many young people have trouble with their conduct because they still cling to the idea that life is all play. Adults have to accept the fact that most of their time and energy must be spent in getting the work of the world done. Of course they need to have fun and recreation, too, but these take second place. One of the marks of maturity is a willingness to pitch in and lend a hand with whatever work has to be done.



Helping out at home shows you are willing and able to assume responsibility.



Dan is in constant hot water at home because he spends all his time on his own activities. His parents want him to enjoy himself, but they feel that he should also be willing to help paint the porch screens and do other necessary jobs around the house. His answer is, "You're only young once. Why spoil it?"

Don't you agree that Dan will be likely to make a more successful husband, father, and worker if he starts doing his share of the chores now? People don't suddenly become responsible when they marry or get a job. They need practice. Helping out at home may seem like a nuisance sometimes, but it does help prepare you for the future.

### **Troubling physical changes**

Another problem during adolescence is adjusting to the many physical changes that take place in your body. It's confusing to find yourself becoming an entirely different person from the child you have been for so long. If you're a girl, curves begin to take the place of sharp angles. Hair grows where once there was only smooth skin. A boy's voice deepens and often embarrasses him by changing pitch in mid-sentence.

New glands become active, making you restless and confused by unaccustomed feelings. It's no wonder that you are depressed at times and on top of the world at others. All this is merely nature preparing you for sexual maturity.

No one can hurry the process and you will be happier if you avoid comparing your growth and development with that of your friends. Each one of us develops at a different rate. Perhaps your best friend is exactly your age and already three inches taller than you are. Don't let it worry you. Within a few months his growth may come to a halt and you will catch up with him or even top him.

The important thing is to accept your new masculinity or femininity as a valuable asset. Be glad that you're a girl or proud that you're a boy. Welcome your new growth and development. It will take a little time to adjust yourself physically and emotionally to all the new changes in your body and in your feelings. But it will be easier if you don't worry!

### **New horizons**

As you grow up, you often find that the ideals and standards you have been brought up with are different from those of many other people. You want to be loyal to your parents and what they have taught you. On the other hand, you also respect the attitudes of the many new people in your life, your friends, teachers, and other adults. As a result, it's sometimes difficult to know what to think or believe.

These conflicts are apt to be troublesome and confusing, but they merely mean that your horizons are widening. You are learning that there are *many* ways of thinking and acting. By becoming familiar with new ideas and attitudes, and evaluating them, you will learn to form your own opinions. The important thing is to keep an open mind.

It may disturb you to discover that things you once considered ideal—your home and family—are far from perfect. You do a lot of fault-finding with them, and because this hurts your parents' feelings you find yourself in hot water. Yet this, too, is a necessary part of growing up. If you kept all your childish faith in the perfection of things as they are, you would never be able to gather the courage to strike out for yourself and live your own life.

One of the freedoms you want now is the freedom to make your own mistakes. Because your parents have already gone through many experiences that are new to you, they feel you should follow their advice and profit by their mistakes. But somehow people don't learn too well from the errors of others; they have to make their own.

Accept the fact that you *will* make your own mistakes and find things out for yourself by trial and error. But you can be reasonably intelligent about listening to others and profiting, where you can, by their experience. It will save you a lot of time and difficulty.

### **Proving yourself**

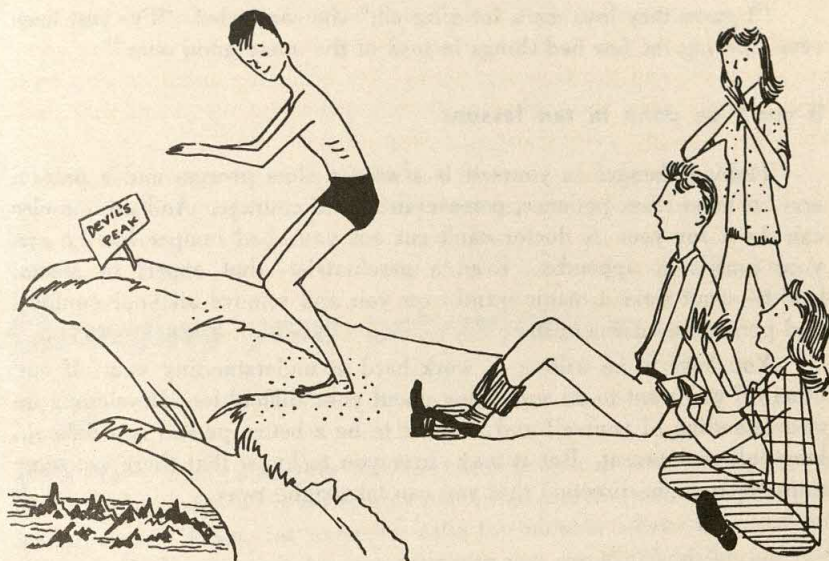
Often young people get into trouble because they want to prove to parents and teachers and other people in authority that they, too, are individuals in their own right. They may choose destructive ways of showing this. For example, the boy who lets his hot rod out to 70 miles an hour on the highway may do so because of the urge to assert himself as an individual; he wants to feel important and powerful. Unfortunately, the power he demonstrates is at odds with what is best for the rest of the community.

Occasionally teen-agers will do something daring or unconventional because they want to make the gang notice and pay more attention to them. But prestige or attention gained by these methods is not apt to be really satisfying or lasting. By being a good friend and carrying your share of the load, you'll have a far better chance of becoming a popular member of the group.

### **Understanding comes first**

We can never hope to improve ourselves until we know what makes us choose the unrewarding reaction instead of the satisfactory one. So an





**A daring act may impress your friends but such popularity won't last long.**

understanding of why we act as we do and why others act as they do is important. Unless you know what makes you tick, you are a mystery to yourself. The behavior of others with whom you have to live and work and play is equally baffling if you make no effort to look behind their actions for the causes.

Was Dad just being mean the other night when he picked on you at the dinner table? Or could it have been that his boss picked on him that day and he was just human enough to have to take it out on someone else?

Quite often a young person, too, has stored up quantities of resentment and hostility against adults while he was in the process of growing up. These feelings must come out somehow. Otherwise, like an overloaded electrical circuit, he might "blow a fuse." Misconduct is one of the commonest outlets. Insolence, defiance, and disobedience are all ways of getting back at adults for their past unkindness.

It seems to be human nature to remember the times when we had occasion for complaint and to pass lightly over the many benefits we received. One girl, who was very bitter because she felt unfairly treated by her parents, tried making a list of kindnesses they had shown her. She recalled the time she had scarlet fever and her mother sat for hours at a time reading *Black Beauty* aloud to her. One Christmas her father had gone without a new fishing rod he wanted to give her the bicycle she had asked for.

"I guess they love me a lot after all," she concluded. "I've just been remembering the few bad things instead of the many good ones."

### **It can't be done in ten lessons**

Making changes in yourself is always a slow process and a painful one. It takes time, patience, perseverance, and courage. And no one else can do it for you. A doctor can't cut out your bad temper like he can your tonsils or appendix. Even a psychiatrist—that expert in mental health—can't wave a magic wand over you and remove all your conflicts and personality difficulties.

You have to be willing to work hard at understanding yourself and others if you want to do something about your difficulties. Developing an understanding of yourself and a desire to be a better person is a difficult, long-pull assignment. But it may cheer you to know that there are some steps in the right direction that you can take right away.



## Changing your behavior

**G**ETTING along smoothly with the other people in your life—parents, friends, teachers—is really very much like carrying out your part in a square dance. Mom, for example, calls the number when she rings the dinner bell. Your cue is to drop whatever you are doing at the moment and get to the table pronto. To make the rest of the family wait while the meal gets cold is a form of poor sportsmanship. It means that you are not considering the other members of the team, in this case your family.

The fun and satisfaction of a square dance come from the enthusiasm with which everyone enters into the spirit of things and the skill with which they execute the right motions. In the same way, good behavior results from doing the right thing at the right time in the right way.

### Can you spare 60 seconds?

Many of the things that bring you a gold star for good conduct take no more than 60 seconds. Hanging up your coat when you come in, rinsing out the thermos bottle in your lunch kit, returning the book you borrowed, telephoning to inquire about a sick friend, making your bed in the morning, scrubbing the tub after your bath, writing a thank-you note for a gift or a good time—none of these little courtesies take much time. And in return for the few seconds invested you get a tremendous dividend of appreciation and good will from others, besides a great deal of personal satisfaction. When you perform in the way you know you should, it always gives you a warm glow. Neglecting to do so, on the other hand, usually makes you feel guilty.

Evelyn spent so much time on the telephone one evening, complaining to a pal about the vast amount of homework facing her, that she had to stay up an hour beyond her regular bedtime to get her history theme

finished. She was so tired the next morning that she slept through the alarm and didn't have time to tidy up her room.

What happened when Evelyn came home after school? An irate mother greeted her with a scolding. When, she demanded, was Evelyn going to grow up enough to leave her room in order? Evelyn started scowling at this point. She resented being treated as if she were a child. Home ought to be a pleasant place, she said, not one where people get picked on and nagged at.

Evelyn was quite right. Home *should* be a pleasant place. But this means that everyone in the family shares a responsibility for making it so. Your parents can't do the job alone. It isn't fair to expect them to do all the compromising and adjusting while you contribute nothing.

In Evelyn's case, all the unpleasantness could easily have been avoided. If she had jumped out of bed five minutes earlier, she could have left everything shipshape, and escaped the disagreeable consequences. By getting her homework done on schedule instead of wasting time complaining about it, she wouldn't have had such difficulty getting up in the morning. Evelyn can't expect home to be happy unless she helps to make it so.

### **Be an efficiency expert**

Look at this matter of doing what's expected of you in terms of energy put forth. Tidying up your room in the morning is roughly equivalent to the physical effort involved in running one base or riding your bicycle the distance between two telephone poles. Isn't it worth using up that much energy for the sake of peace and harmony?

By tackling a job the first time your parents ask you—weeding the garden, say, or washing the windows—you'll save a lot of strength that you'd have used in arguing or in explaining later why you "forgot" to do the chore. This has been proved! Time and motion studies, worked out by engineering experts, show that you use less energy by doing a task promptly and willingly than by goldbricking or finding excuses for not doing it.

There are efficient and inefficient ways of doing jobs, too. Harry Lindsay, who lives next door to Ted Graham, insisted recently that he saved a lot of time and energy by mowing the lawn once every two weeks. He said that Ted was an idiot to bother with the job every Saturday.

Ted timed himself and found that it took him an hour each week—or two hours in two weeks—to cut the grass. By holding his stop watch on Harry, he was able to prove that doing the chore every other week required *two-and-a-half hours!* Neglecting the grass made it grow so much taller that an extra half-hour was needed to cut it.



The same principle applies to other jobs, like washing dishes. If you let the dirty dishes stand around, the grease hardens and it takes much longer to get them clean. The smart dishwasher gets them out of the way as soon as possible. This saves valuable time and effort, not to mention winning a few compliments on your willingness and dependability.



The more promptly you do a job that has to be done, the easier it will go.

If you know a job has to be done, you may as well do it promptly and graciously. You get extra credit for the assignment and you feel better about doing it.

### **Be your own policeman**

Behaving in acceptable ways involves something more important than just saving time and energy or winning popularity. Doing what is expected of you is effort put forth in an even greater cause—self-discipline.

When you were a child, you didn't need much self-discipline. Other people took care of the discipline for you. They said *no* or slapped your hand when you were up to something harmful or dangerous. But you're grown up now. And a big part of being mature is learning to be your own policeman.

It requires a good deal of practice to master the art of saying *no* to impulses like being lazy, putting things off, snapping back at your kid brother or sister, and any number of other temptations to be less than your best self. Any one of these acts of self-discipline may take only 60

seconds to put into operation. But the effect is cumulative. Every time you discipline yourself away from selfish or thoughtless acts the score adds up. Even though you can't win control over your actions in a day, a week, or a month, you will gradually build a disciplined personality that will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life.

### Thanks a million

It takes only a minute to express appreciation instead of acting indifferent or critical. People are always hungry for approval; it's something that they never seem to get enough of. You know how it brightens your day when someone comments on how nice you look or on how well you did in the school play. It's really just as easy to say "Thanks" or "How nice" than to find fault or act unappreciative.



**Don't be afraid to pay a sincere compliment or show appreciation of others.**

Teen-agers sometimes think it's sophisticated not to show enthusiasm for anything. They seem to feel it's a mark of distinction to continually pick flaws and find fault, with books, movies, teachers, parents, and everything else. Actually, these "sophisticates" are missing out on a great deal. The capacity to feel and show enthusiasm helps us enjoy life. It also helps us get along with people.

Even if you find it difficult at first, try to make a point of expressing appreciation for something every day. You don't have to be a hypocrite to do this. Look around you carefully—you can usually find *something* about which it's possible to say an admiring or approving word. And



you'll be surprised how going through the motions, even stiffly, helps you to actually feel what you're saying.

### More basic methods of changing behavior

While a minute is all you will need to correct some of your behavior failings, others will involve much more work on your part. It takes a good deal of honest probing and self-understanding to learn to behave in more mature ways.

Many of you have probably at some time taken an alarm clock apart and been intrigued by the complexity of its springs and wheels. Human beings are even more complicated. We have any number of trigger-mechanisms that set off our behavior. And they are all influenced by our own particular experiences. This means that they are entirely individual. What makes one person laugh (like being teased, for example) will make another person angry. No two of us are exactly alike, because different things have happened to us. We each think and feel and react differently.

To prove this, just ask the next ten persons you meet to say the first thing that pops into their heads after you mention the word "red." Their associations with the word may vary as much as this: fire; underwear; a cardinal; my new hat; blood; Communists; a rose; nail polish.

Since you are different from everybody else in the world, no one can tell you in a few simple sentences exactly what lies behind your particular behavior problems. One girl's bossiness, for instance, may be due to the fact that her parents have always tried to make her decisions for her and now she is trying to prove, to herself and everybody else, that she is independent. Another girl with a similar desire to run things may have been accustomed from childhood to having her own way.

The important thing is to make an effort to understand why *you* act as you do. Learn all you can about yourself. Try to be honest; refuse to give yourself alibis for your actions. Discover the *real* reason for that temper tantrum or that black mood. For example, do you get mad at your brother because he teases you, as you like to think? Or is it really because secretly you have always been a little jealous of him? If you are jealous of him, why? Do you feel that in some way your parents favor him more than you? Is there good reason for you to think this is the cause, or do you just resent the fact that he's older and has more privileges? Try to think through the situation. You may be surprised at what you discover about yourself.

### Talk out your troubles

Some people compress their feelings inside themselves like steam inside a pressure cooker. They never let anyone know that something is

S. G. H. S. West Bengal

Date .....

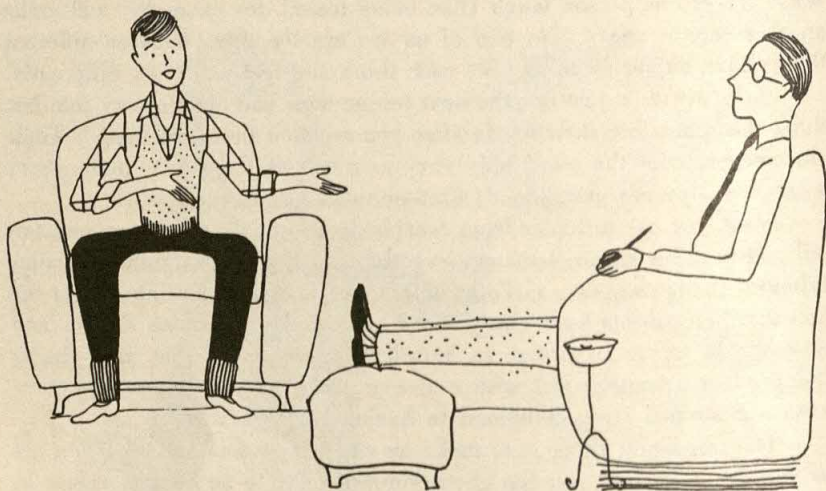
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bothering them. Sometimes they don't even admit it to themselves. Eventually the pressure builds up to such a degree that the individual explodes into angry tears or bitter words or violent action.

If you have an abscessed finger the doctor lances it and lets the pus drain out. The moment it is opened, the throbbing ceases. Similarly, your wounded feelings or hurt pride cause you less trouble if you can give expression to them and share your problem with someone else. Keeping your troubles to yourself is likely to make them worse. If you repress them, they fester the way a splinter does in your finger.

There is nothing cowardly or weak about confiding in a trusted friend—a good pal, a teacher, your parents, your Scout leader, the family doctor or minister. If something is bothering you, don't hide it. Face your difficulty instead of trying to ignore it. Then bring it out in the



**Bring your problem into the open by discussing it with someone you can trust.**

open by discussing it with someone who is interested in you and will be understanding.

### **Consult an expert**

If your problem is serious and you don't know anyone you feel you could confide in, by all means go to an expert. How do you know if it's serious? If your difficulty is one that disturbs you deeply, interferes with your daily life, or seems to be growing progressively worse, then it's time to consult someone who has the necessary knowledge and experience to help you.



Agnes, for instance, found herself becoming more and more irritable and uncomfortable unless she observed certain strict routines. For every day of the week there was a particular dress or skirt and sweater that she had to wear. It would upset her if she had to wear Tuesday's outfit on Monday. Once she even failed an English test because she was worrying about whether she had remembered to lock her diary and put the key in the toe of a certain pair of slippers where she always kept it. Anxieties about unimportant things like this were making it difficult for her to live normally and happily. Agnes needed an expert to help her get to the root of her problem and solve it.

Today almost every community has some source of help for the distressed individual, or can recommend an agency near by. In Agnes' case, for instance, her doctor sent her to the out-patient department of a hospital about 40 miles away where there was a psychiatrist on the staff.

Your best sources of help if you feel that you need outside assistance with your problems are:

1. *A teacher or older friend* in whom you have confidence. Older people have had experience with problems and can often give helpful advice.

2. *Your family physician.* If he can't give you the treatment necessary to solve your problem he will recommend someone who can. Today many doctors refer troubled patients to competent psychiatrists who are specially trained to help people understand disturbed emotions and solve troublesome conflicts.

3. *Your clergyman, priest, or rabbi.* Many religious leaders serve as counselors to people with personal problems.

4. *A family agency* in your community where you can get counseling and advice.

5. *A mental health clinic* that is connected with your school or local hospital.

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## IV

# You and your moods

**S**OME of your behavior problems may be caused by the tempestuous and unmanageable moods that seem to go along with adolescence. A few short years ago you may have been known as "that good-natured Smith girl" or "the boy who's always whistling." Now you are suddenly subject to all sorts of black moments when you wonder why you were ever born. Or you find yourself blowing up and saying things you later regret. Your temper is as unpredictable and hard to control as a bucking bronc. One day you're on top of the world, the next you're in the depths of despair. When you're feeling fine, you're a delight to everyone around you, but when you're unhappy, you're a holy terror.

With so many changes going on in your body and feelings and ideas, it's no wonder that things get out of hand sometimes. But gradually you'll adjust to the changes.

Despite the fact that many of your problems will disappear with time, you can't shut yourself up in a glass cage and wait them out. You want to be able to understand and cope with your difficulties now.

What are some of the things that bother you and cause you to misbehave? You may be having trouble with schoolwork. Perhaps your appearance is not all you would like it to be. Maybe you have difficulty making friends and are afraid that you're not a likable person. Or maybe you're concerned over problems with your family.

There are two courses you can take. You can just sit by and let your difficulties make you depressed and irritable. Or you can face your problems and do something about them, which is the constructive way.

### Facing your problems

If you're having trouble in school, being depressed about the situation is not going to be of much help. What seems to be the difficulty?



Do you find geometry an impossible subject to learn? Is English grammar your bugaboo? Do you feel overwhelmed by homework? Pin down the specific problem that's bothering you and then tackle it. If a certain subject seems too hard for you, have a talk with your teacher. Tell him your difficulty, convince him of your desire to do better, and ask him for suggestions. Most teachers are only too glad to help out students. If you have difficulty with homework, it's time to overhaul your study schedule. By budgeting your time, getting as much homework as possible done in school study periods, and by cultivating efficient study habits, you can make real progress.

Are you appalled every time you look in the mirror, convinced that you are the original ugly duckling? Worrying isn't going to turn you into a swan. Face the fact that there are certain things about yourself you can't change—the shape of your nose, the color of your eyes, your height. But you can make the most of what you've got. With hundreds of books and magazine articles giving advice on good grooming and how to choose clothes, there is no lack of help available. Even if you can never be exotically beautiful or ruggedly handsome, you can be attractive, well-groomed, and becomingly dressed.

What if you don't have many friends and feel left out of things? Perhaps you never have any dates, no one ever invites you anywhere. Sulking about it at home won't accomplish anything, because people certainly won't come *looking* for you. But there are many things you can do. You can improve your tennis game, learn to swim, dance, or play a musical instrument. Practice how to tell an amusing story well, converse interestingly, or just be a good listener. Join clubs, volunteer for special projects, go out for activities. Your new abilities and interests will bring you into situations where you'll meet and work with people. And because you'll be *participating* in activities you don't need to feel awkward or unwanted. It's up to you to be resourceful about making an effort to become an interesting, sought-after person.

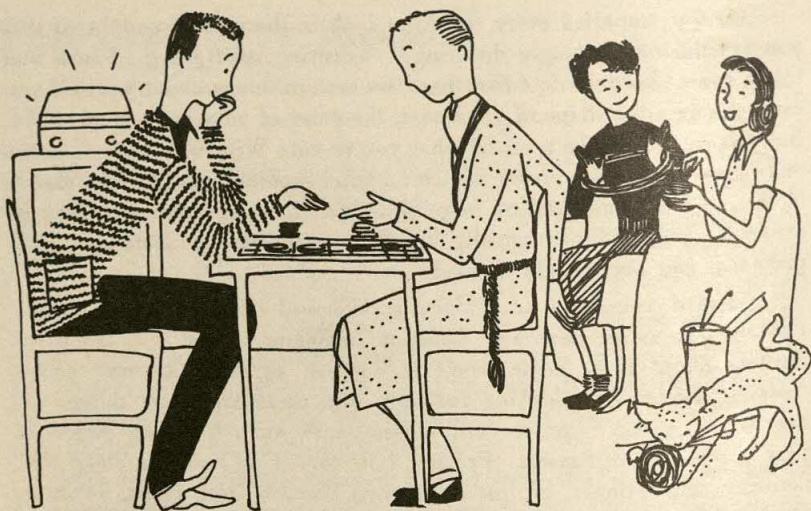
### Your new needs

Until recently friends of your own sex were all-important to you. But now you begin to sense the need of mattering more to members of the other sex. You want to feel important in the eyes of Janie or Joe. Their smile of approval and the fun of dating them are becoming the most vital things in the world to you.

Your parents either may not understand this desire or be out of sympathy with it. Often they have forgotten how they felt at your age. Then, too, their feelings are hurt when they find themselves no longer as

important to you as they used to be. Perhaps they make it impossible for you to have as many dates as you would like.

Being tactful and considerate of your parents helps to accustom them to the idea of allowing you more freedom. Perhaps you could play cards with them occasionally in the evening when you're not going out. Or you could sit and talk or listen to the radio with them instead of going off in a corner to read or write letters. They enjoy your company and will be more reasonable about letting you go out if they feel you're interested in spending some of your time with them.



**Time spent with parents can be fun and helps you to understand one another.**

Betty was very disturbed because her parents insisted on her being home at ten every night. So she persuaded them to join a club of other parents in the neighborhood. By talking over their common problems, the group settled on a mutual curfew for all the young people, and Betty no longer felt that her parents were restricting her activities. Common sense solved a difficulty that no amount of sulks or tears would have improved.

### **Brooding is only for hens**

Problems like the ones we've just discussed often make you feel depressed and misunderstood. Life seems frustrating. You become unhappy, gloomy, or resentful because your deep new needs for appreciation and recognition and freedom aren't being satisfied.

You can't expect to escape low moods entirely. Everyone has them



at times. It's unreasonable to expect always to be happy and serene. In this far from perfect world, there are plenty of real reasons for feeling depressed at times. But it's a mistake to let despondency become a habit or to accept it as part of your personality. Gloominess is not something you're born with; it's not an unchangeable part of the real *you*.

By doing something constructive about your black moods, you'll pull yourself out of them. So try substituting action for brooding. Experiment a little and discover what activity works best for you. Here is a list of things one group of high school students said *they* found effective in chasing the blues:

Playing tennis  
Going for a swim  
Cleaning out bureau drawers  
Reading a good book  
Taking a brisk walk  
Playing the piano  
Dressing up and going  
somewhere  
Resolving not to take  
life so seriously  
Listening to records  
Dancing  
Confiding in a friend

Making something with  
their hands  
Driving a car  
Whistling or singing  
Writing a poem  
Seeking out cheerful people  
Reminding themselves of all the  
good things that have  
happened  
Remembering that tomorrow is  
another day  
Going to a movie  
Sleeping it off

### **Put on an act**

Make yourself go through the motions of looking and acting cheerful, even if the smile you wear threatens to crack your face. This really works. It's based on the idea that the way you act determines how you feel, not the other way around. Thus if you pound the table with your fists and shout, you quickly become angry; run away and you feel afraid.

In the same way, wearing a long face and sighing a lot increases your gloom. But if you throw your shoulders back, hold your head high, and smile, it helps to banish that hangdog feeling you have when you're low. Try it and see. Feelings are a little like sheep; they like to play follow-the-leader. Often they ape your actions. Act as if you were on top of the world and you'll be a lot more likely to feel that way.

### **Do something for somebody else**

Being blue is essentially a self-centered occupation. By getting out of yourself and doing something for another person, you lift yourself from

depression by your own bootstraps. You avoid preoccupation with your troubles. It's only possible to concentrate on so many problems at one time. Try worrying about someone else's woes, and your own will fade into the background.

The friendly, helpful, outgoing person is not likely to be as glum as the self-centered one. It's no mere coincidence that the word "sulky," used to describe a sullen individual, also means a small conveyance with room for only one person! Move over and make room for others to travel along with you if you want to get rid of the blues.

### **Practice makes perfect**

Instead of blaming outside circumstances for your low moods, try changing yourself. Disciplining yourself to accept minor disappointments without going into a tailspin is good practice. If you don't learn techniques for mastering frustration now, you may be swamped in later life by every little thing that goes wrong.

You may protest, "But how can I control my moods? They're bigger than I am. Things happen to upset me and there's nothing I can do about them!"

That's what Helen said when her mother urged her to stop being so glum around the house just because things didn't suit her. Then Helen's friends stopped by to take her along to the Teen Canteen and a magical change occurred. Helen became her usual pleasant self. Nothing had changed the situation about which she was sulking. Yet she could be agreeable with outsiders, reserving her sullenness for the family.

If you can be gracious to some people, no matter how low you feel, it shows that you can control your moods when you want to. By exercising a little more good will in everyday living, rather than just when you feel like it, you can lick your moodiness.

### **Losing your temper**

Getting angry and flying off the handle is just a noisier way of showing hurt feelings than sulking or being blue. Both forms of moodiness are a little like holding a gun at the back of other people, forcing them to pay attention to you. You are likely to use the method you found useful when you were small. If temper tantrums usually got you what you wanted as a child, you may still take the hotheaded approach.

Some people believe that having a temper is the sign of a strong character. It isn't. Actually it is a symptom of weakness. The angry person is never as sure of himself as his loud voice would seem to indicate.



He has a rather low opinion of himself, and so he screams and shouts to cover up.

Anger may give you a momentary sense of power. It seems to make you more important than the other fellow. But the satisfaction it provides doesn't last long. Later you feel shame and remorse, plus the fear that you have acted like a fool and lowered yourself in the opinion of others.



Friends are apt to get disgusted if you're continually blowing up.

In order for people to get along together reasonably well, some self-control is necessary. The individual who is always blowing up and demanding too much patience and understanding from his associates is apt to lose their respect and admiration.

If you lose your temper easily, what you need is a stronger sense of your own worth and importance. You have to learn to be better satisfied with yourself and to take more credit for your achievements and successes. At the same time you should try to be less concerned with what others think of you. Does it really matter so much, anyway, if you are already doing your best?

By taking more pleasure in the friendliness of those who do appreciate your efforts, you can gradually increase your self-confidence and good opinion of yourself. There are many people who *do* approve of you. Keep count some day of the number of times people say or do something nice. Stack these kindnesses up against the disagreeable things that happen to you and see if they aren't more important. By taking more satisfaction in the things that turn out well and make you happy, you buffer yourself against the inevitable hurts and disappointments.

### Some tips

If you have difficulty keeping your temper, here are some helpful suggestions:

1. *Cultivate a philosophy of life that automatically comes to your rescue in distress.* When someone insults you or makes a disagreeable remark, say to yourself: "He must be feeling worse than I do. Or maybe he doesn't know any better. So I can afford not to take offense."

2. *Put insults out of your mind quickly.* By dwelling on them you can work a minor irritation up into a full-size rage. Ben wasn't angry at first when he discovered that Tom had made a nasty crack about him. But the more he thought about it, the more unfairly treated he felt. Finally he became infuriated, found Tom, and ended up having a fist fight with him.

3. *Use the energy generated by anger to do something constructive.* Write that theme you've been putting off. Clean up your room. Chop wood for fireplace logs. Cut out a new dress. You'll be draining off your resentment and putting it to work *for* you instead of *against* you. When you're feeling burned up, it's amazing how much you can get done by utilizing the swift energy released by rage. The caveman used it to bash in his enemy's skull with a club or to take to his heels and run away from a saber-toothed tiger. If you're smart you'll use it to accomplish something constructive.



**Work off your anger by doing something constructive with that extra energy.**

4. *Learn to give in a little.* Even the Empire State Building sways by as much as a foot when a gale is blowing. The engineers designed it that way for safety. Saplings bend before the wind. If they resisted a storm they would be snapped off. To keep yourself from being buffeted by every emotional storm, learn to compromise sometimes. You'll find life much easier.

5. *Give yourself applause for a good performance when you do the best you can.* Value your abilities and develop confidence in your own



worth. Having faith in yourself makes it less necessary for you to be overcritical of others or too sensitive to their opinion.

6. *Use tact and diplomacy to get what you want.* Making a request in a friendly way helps to avoid refusal or rejection. High-pressuring others never works as well as a pleasant approach. *Using* your head is always smarter than *losing* it!

### **Nobody bats a thousand**

Both gloominess and anger can be considerably lessened if you refuse to make a major tragedy out of every defeat. It isn't in the cards for you to win every time. Unpleasant things happen to all of us. You have plenty of company—the whole human race.

When things don't go your way it doesn't do much good to mope or blow up. Accept a certain amount of disappointment as part of life. Taking it like a good sport will win you friends and help you keep the ones you already have.

## Are you a chameleon?

**O**NE MINUTE it's a bright green. The next it's grayish-black or speckled with yellow spots. Then it's a brilliant scarlet. We're talking about that sluggish lizard, the *chameleon*, nature's quick-change artist. It takes on the color of its surroundings in a jiffy. With no trouble at all it can look like a pile of leaves or a heap of brush.

Some young people are like the chameleon. They change to match their background. Put them with a boisterous gang at the corner drug-store and they can make as much noise as anyone. Set them down among some chronic complainers and they too find fault with everything. Or if the bunch wants to be quiet and sedate, they can oblige with ease. They'll gossip with the rest if the crowd starts spreading rumors about a local character.

### Going along with the crowd

You may never have thought of it this way, but changing opinions and attitudes and actions to reflect those of others is actually a form of misbehavior. It means you are failing to be a mature person, to accept responsibility for actions and opinions of your own. Often you may harm others by your unreliable behavior. Here's one example.

Sally's English teacher talked to the class about racial tolerance and the unfairness of discrimination against minority groups. Sally was fired with enthusiasm and wrote an inspired theme on the subject. But a few days later she voted with the majority of her sorority sisters not to extend a bid to a new girl in school who had recently come to this country from Europe. "We don't want any foreigners," Sally explained that night at the dinner table.

Sally, in opposition to her own beliefs, was helping to make a

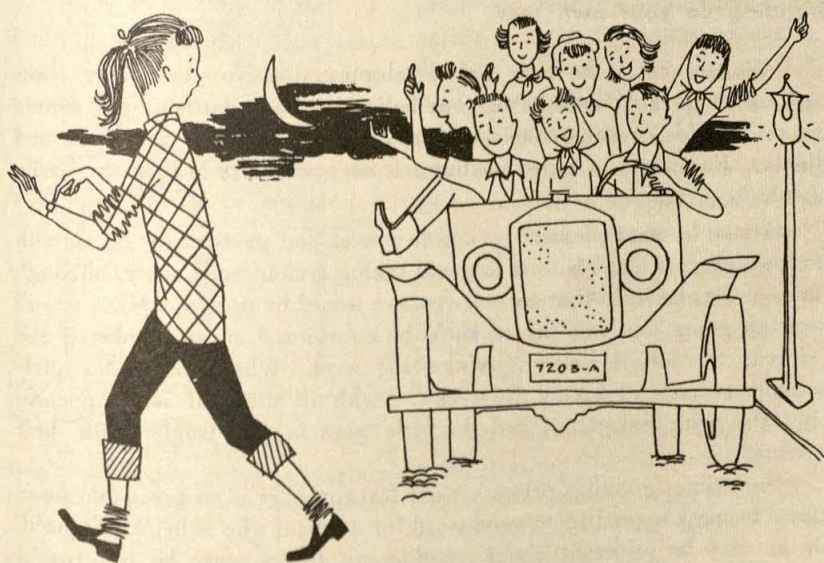


perfectly nice girl feel unwanted and left out of things. The chances are that if she had stood up for her own convictions and stated plainly why she thought the European girl should be included, she might have convinced the others to vote differently.

In addition to harming others by constantly changing your attitudes, you damage your own self-respect. Sally, for example, really felt guilty about what she had done, although she tried not to admit it to herself.

It's fine to be agreeable and swim with the tide when you can. You don't have to be like the rookie who complained that everybody drilling in the squad was out of step except himself! People who oppose the majority, just for the sake of being contrary, are just as much on the wrong track as those who feel they always have to be yes-men.

Tact and diplomacy are essential to getting along smoothly with others. But using tact is not the same as being too easily influenced by others for fear that you won't be liked. To go along with the crowd is always easier than taking a stand of your own where important issues are involved. However, being a pushover can get you into trouble. It can even make you lose your good opinion of yourself.



No matter how much the gang urges you, don't do something you feel is wrong.

Tim hated to say *no* the night the gang of boys he was with decided to "borrow" a parked car for a joy ride. They were caught in the act and accused of stealing. It caused Tim's parents a great deal of distress when

he had to appear in court. Now there is a black mark against his name—and theirs.

### **Why people are pushovers**

Why do young people sometimes find it hard to differ from their friends where matters of principle are concerned? It's usually because they lack self-confidence.

Growing up often arouses feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. At times you may not feel any too sure of yourself. But you sense that there is strength in numbers. By losing yourself in the crowd, you can feel safer and stronger than standing all by yourself.

In a way you are using the gang to take the place your parents occupied when you were small. You are depending on it for protection and moral support. You may think you are completely independent, but actually you are trading the apron-strings for a different set of controls. For real independence you have to use your own mind—not the yardstick of the gang—to arrive at carefully thought-out opinions and conclusions.

### **Standing on your own feet**

Adolescence is the time for developing positive personality traits such as being fairly definite in your beliefs and standards. Some people err on the side of being too opinionated and having too rigid likes and dislikes. But there is a happy medium. It isn't necessary to be wishy-washy and indecisive.

Alicia, for example, was invited to a week-end party at the beach with a crowd of girls who planned to avoid taking a chaperone along, although their parents believed that an older person would be present. Alicia wasn't keen on going, but was afraid she'd be considered a wet blanket if she refused. So despite her misgivings, she went. When one of the girls became seriously ill during the week-end with an attack of acute appendicitis, the truth leaked out and the girls were in real trouble with their parents.

Sometimes a young person's need for approval is so great that he is afraid to speak up and say a good word for a friend who is being criticized. Or he may be reluctant about standing up for a cause he believes in because his opinion is an unpopular one. Instead he accepts the judgment of the crowd just to be "one of them."

This is a dangerous habit to fall into. If you don't learn to make your own decisions on important matters now, you may never be able to do so. To fill your need for momentary approval from others, you will have



sacrificed your right to the admiration and respect that is won by cultivating *integrity*. Members of the crowd may not applaud you for disagreeing with them, but deep down they'll respect you for sticking to your guns. For instance, a friend might enjoy having you always on his side at the moment, regardless of whether he's right or wrong. But ten years from now will that same friend recommend you for a job requiring honesty and integrity?

### What you owe to yourself

There are times when it's necessary to take a stand against things that you know are wrong. Some issues are too important to be side-stepped or ignored. They call for the courage to be your best self and to state your position.

What it all boils down to is really a matter of loyalty—loyalty to the things you believe in, loyalty to yourself. You are a much more important

person than you realize. No one else in the whole world is quite like you. You're unique. Even your fingerprints are different from every other person's. And if just the whorls on the tips of your fingers are special, think how distinctive your ideas, talents, and capacities must be.

The truth is that you are filled with unrealized potentialities and abilities. You don't need to content yourself with being a carbon copy of someone else. The world is full of duplicates. What you're intended to be is an "original."

The world values originals whether they are rare paintings, handmade rugs, or fine human beings. So don't settle for being just a reasonable facsimile of everyone else in your



**Don't settle for being a carbon copy of someone else—be yourself!**

gang. Be yourself—and dare to be loyal to your principles.

This doesn't mean that you can never change your mind about anything, that once you take a stand you have to keep it permanently. We all change many of our ideas and attitudes as we mature—if we didn't, our minds and our emotions wouldn't develop very far. Changing your mind because various experiences have thrown new light on a matter is a

sensible and mature thing to do. But shifting ground because of every new friend or influence is a sign of immaturity.

**"Have you heard what they're saying?"**

Standards and values of your own are what give you *character*. This may be an old-fashioned word but it stands for something that will never go out of style.

Character causes others to value and trust you, to have confidence in you. They know you won't let them down because you won't let yourself down either. But character isn't acquired by being a weathervane and shifting with every change in the wind. A reputation for personal integrity isn't earned by gossiping about other people or spreading rumors you hear. You can't be a wobbler, an opportunist, a fair-weather friend, or a rumor-monger, and still win the admiration and respect of those whose opinion matters to you.



**Your friends won't trust you if you're always spreading gossip about others.**

Often people gossip because they want to feel important, to seem to know something that no one else does. Remember how as a child you used to boast, "I know something that *you* don't know"? Spreading gossip is sometimes just a more grown-up version of this same childish taunt.

Gossip can also be an outlet for all sorts of troublesome emotional conflicts. For example, the individual whose curiosity about sex has been so strongly repressed that he is afraid or ashamed to admit his interest, may delight in spreading scandal about others. In this way he can



discharge some of his own pent-up feelings without feeling guilty about having them.

The person who repeats vicious tales about another's reputation is usually suffering from a good deal of resentment and hostility. He is a hurt and angry individual. By attacking someone else, he manages to make himself feel better temporarily because he has gotten rid of some of his hostile feelings. But this doesn't last. He would do better to find out what is causing his resentment so that he could deal with the *real* problem and try to solve it.

Jealousy causes some people to repeat unfounded tales about those who are a rung or two above them on the ladder of success. By running down others or criticizing their achievements, these people make themselves feel better about being less successful.

There is no such thing as harmless gossip. Friendships have been destroyed, lives ruined, reputations torn down, and serious unhappiness caused, all because tales with no foundation of truth were repeated. A piece of gossip may seem harmless to you, but you don't know how it's going to affect others.

Gossiping not only hurts others; it hurts the gossiper, too. Phyllis discovered this to her sorrow when her friends began to avoid her. Every time she came into the room, they changed the subject they were discussing and talked about the weather or some other unimportant matter. She felt hurt and finally asked one of the girls why they treated her as if she had some contagious disease.

"It's because you twist the things we say and get us into trouble with other people," Amy told her bluntly. "Sometimes you embroider on things you hear or even make them up out of whole cloth."

If you fail to be loyal to your friends and to your principles, you spoil things for yourself, just as Phyllis did.

### **Be courageous**

If you hear a person being unfairly criticized or condemned, say something nice about him. Don't be afraid to speak up for your convictions even if you know that what you have to say won't always please others. If your friends are planning something questionable, have the courage to disagree.

Who knows? You may be the one whose courage will eventually sway the group's attitude in a better direction. In any case, you will win their respect for not being easily swayed against your better judgment.

Agree with others when you can. When you can't, be a brave dissenter and stand your ground.

## VI

# The teen-age rebellion

**S**IXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Steve was furious when his parents refused to let him cash in a savings bond, earmarked for his education, to buy a "bargain" in a secondhand jalopy.

"Everything that's any fun is always forbidden," he growled resentfully.

It does seem that way at times. Even adults find it so. Most children look forward to being grown up because they imagine adulthood means having and doing whatever they want. Instead, it means accepting many self-imposed restrictions that have gradually taken the place of those imposed by others.

Teen-agers want to have a good time and be popular. They long to plunge headlong into life, sample new experiences, and have unlimited personal freedom. They find it hard to postpone pleasure and excitement.

But teen-agers, just like everyone else, find themselves up against a lot of obstacles to doing just as they please. Authority—that stop light of society—rears its ugly head. "You can't" or "You shouldn't" seem to pop up at every turn. As a result, young people often become rebellious and defiant. They take misbehavior as the way out. When someone says *no* they blow up, sulk, or disobey.

### Stop lights protect you

It's a mistake to consider a stop light at the street intersection a nuisance or an interference with your liberty. Actually, it is there to protect you. It stops you for a moment so that you can go ahead safely and get where you are going.

Authority in your life does the same thing. It isn't intended to obstruct you but to benefit you. Take Steve and his savings bond, for



instance. Because he earned the money to buy it himself, he feels that he should be allowed to do what he pleases with it. However, there are other things to consider. Spending money wisely requires real skill. It's necessary to learn to pass up the less important things in order to have the ones that really matter. Steve needs and wants a good education more than a car. His family won't be able to help him much in the way of money and Steve will have to bear most of the expenses for his training. So in the long run he will benefit by his parents' refusal to let him buy the jalopy. He isn't able to see it that way now, and is taking out his disappointment on his parents. But ten years from now when he has a good job and enough money to buy a car, he'll be grateful for the schooling that made it possible.

### **Your parents' job isn't finished yet**

You're not a child any longer, but you're not quite a full-fledged adult either. You haven't completed your education yet. You need more specialized training before you can take up a job or profession. You are still financially dependent on your family for what one teen-ager called "bed and bored." You are also still emotionally dependent on Mom and Dad; their approval or disapproval of your actions means a great deal to you, even though you may not always want to admit it. Legally you are still a minor and your parents are responsible for your conduct.

The fact that you still need your parents to some extent entitles them to the concern for your safety and welfare that you sometimes resent or



**It's difficult to be neither a child nor an adult, but just between the two.**

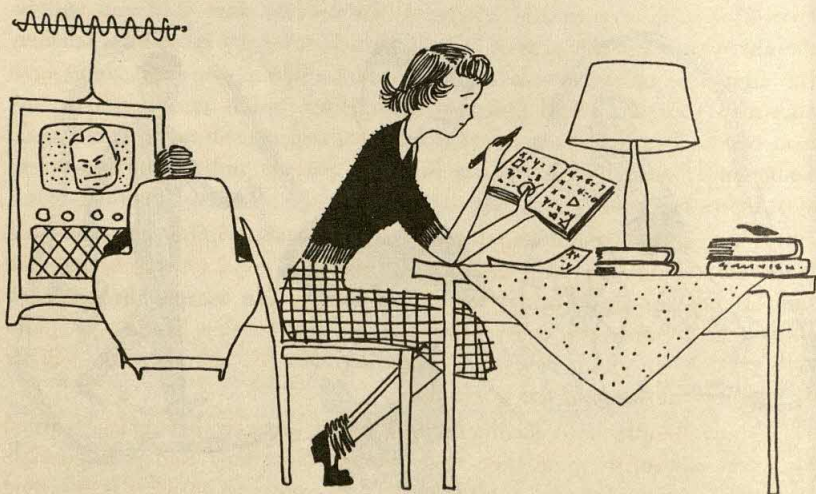
resist. It accounts for why they often seem to be frustrating you. They don't really want to take all the joy out of living. The last thing they want is to make you miserable. But they haven't quite finished their job in raising you. So be patient about accepting a few traffic regulations at home as well as on the highway. And if you rebel at them from time to time, ask yourself how you'd like it if your parents didn't care enough about you to set up any restrictions.

## The clash

What causes some of the conflicts between teen-age wishes and parental restrictions? One reason is the universal desire of human beings to experience pleasure rather than pain. There isn't a person alive who wouldn't prefer to go to the movies rather than to the dentist.

People have different ways of reacting to the difficult and unpleasant things in life. If you wait to have your teeth attended to until one of them starts aching, you are living by what is called the *pleasure principle*. You don't go to the dentist until the tooth hurts so much that having it treated becomes the less painful course of action.

What makes a sensible person visit his dentist regularly, even though he knows he may be hurt a little if a cavity has to be filled? Psychologists call it the *reality principle*. This means a willingness to accept some discomfort or postpone an immediate satisfaction for the sake of enjoying a larger benefit in the future. It's more fun to watch TV than to study for an exam. But postponing Red Skelton and concentrating on



Sometimes it's necessary to postpone pleasure for something more important.



isosceles triangles is more likely to insure you a passing grade on the exam and in the course.

Your parents, teachers, and others who have authority over you represent the reality principle in your life. When necessary, they put pressure on you to do the things you ought to do instead of the things you would prefer to do.

Frank's parents, for instance, wouldn't let him quit school to get a job. Operating on the pleasure principle, Frank wanted to go to work so he could earn more money for better clothes and more good times. But his parents insisted that he adopt the reality principle and finish his schooling. They knew that if he graduated from high school he would be able to get a better job and have more of a chance in the long run to get the things he really wanted.

### Rules can help you

This clash between your desires and the demands of authority is always at work. It isn't your fault or the fault of the adults who are interested in you. But you can cope with the problem better if you learn to accept requirements and restrictions with good grace instead of misbehaving when you're not allowed to do something.

Let's go back to the stop light for a moment. Its purpose is to make driving safer for you. So you are really doing something for yourself every time you pull up and come to a stop. It's the same way with accepting authority gracefully. By accepting *no's* and *don't's* you are learning to direct your life wisely. What's more, some day *you* will be the one who gives the orders. You'll be a boss or a parent or a teacher. But first you must be able to take orders. When you have to assume authority yourself, you'll find that bossing others has its difficulties, too. You won't always be considered kind, fair, and considerate. Then you'll understand better how hard it is for your parents and teachers to act as stop lights for you.

The young person who learns to respect stop lights can live and work more smoothly with others. He makes a good citizen because he understands the basic principles of democracy. He accepts the responsibility that accompanies every privilege. He realizes that life is a cooperative venture in which everyone, including himself, shares responsibility for getting the work of the world done.

Many people hold mediocre jobs today because they never learned to accept authority when they were young. Now they find it impossible to get promotions for they can't seem to take orders or do what is expected of them. They feel that the demands of a job are too great, and so they

give only a half-performance. These attitudes were developed over a long period of time.

Right now you are developing attitudes that will stay with you for years. By accepting the rules of the team, obeying the "rules" of your home, doing chores cheerfully, and living up to your obligations, you are acquiring valuable personality traits that will help you get along better throughout your life.

### **See things in perspective**

One of the most important things to achieve in life is *perspective*—the ability to see things *whole* instead of in parts. Most of us tend to look only at the present moment, the situation right at hand. This makes us magnify our immediate problems out of all proportion to their real importance.

One of the requirements of maturity is to take the long-range view of things. This means raising your sights a little. When you first learn to ride a bicycle and see a tree looming ahead, you're likely to run into it if you concentrate just on the obstacle in your path. But if you stop looking at the tree and think about the space between it and the next tree, you can head for safety.

It's the same way with authority. You don't need to clash with it. "Stop lights" in your life aren't obstacles but paths to greater freedom. For real freedom is *responsible* freedom. You have to earn it and be willing to accept some restraints to keep it.



## VII

# Are you a skillful driver?

**L**IFE in this machine age is becoming more complicated all the time. Every year there are more cars and trucks on the road, and the total of traffic accidents is appalling. The trouble lies not with our automobiles but with the people who drive them. Human beings have perfected their machines without taking the trouble to perfect themselves. Machines are simply the instruments of the individuals who operate them. No motor is angry or careless or childish. It's the driver who determines whether the automobile is going to take him places safely.

To be a safe driver, of your life as well as of your car, you must be a mature person. Your attitudes need to be good, sound, tested ones. If you are reliable, responsible, courteous, cooperative, and a good sport, you are certain to be a skillful driver of both your car and your life.

### "Inside-Henry trouble"

Henry didn't realize that a good driver has to know how and when to put the brakes on his emotions as well as on his car. Things had gone wrong that morning from the time he got out of bed. It was Saturday and he planned to go on a fishing trip. But his father reminded him at breakfast that he had agreed to pick up his Aunt Louise, who was coming in on the noon train. Henry was irked and impatient about having his day spoiled. Perhaps if he hurried he could still get in a few hours at the lake before sundown. So he drove like a demon, letting his impatience ride the gas pedal. As a result, he tangled with another car at an intersection and three people spent the night at the local hospital. The bill for repairs to the two cars was enormous.

Henry's lost fishing trip was an expensive one. Yet his accident wasn't caused by mechanical defects in the automobile, bad weather con-

ditions, or coincidence. It was caused by inside-Henry trouble. Most traffic accidents, according to safety experts, are the result of errors in drivers' judgment, often caused by uncontrolled emotions such as anger or impatience.

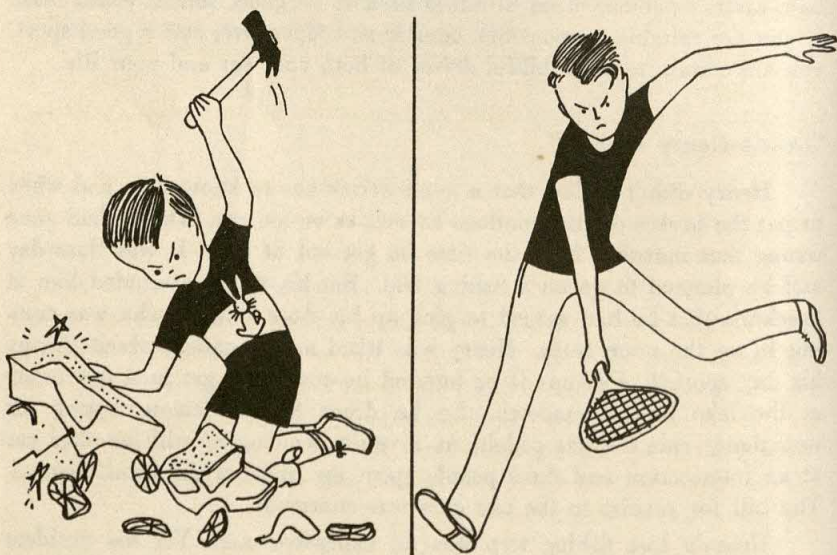
Emotional difficulty in everyday life causes upsets, too. The person who fails to outgrow childish ways of thinking, feeling, and acting can never quite manage to conduct his personal affairs smoothly.

### Using your emotions wisely

We don't mean that emotions are so dangerous that they need to be hidden away. Without strong feelings you would become wishy-washy and ineffectual. Emotions make up the dynamo that generates your power to get useful things done. But you need to make them serve you rather than dictate to you.

Emotions are much too valuable in your life for you to put them in cold storage just because they sometimes can be dangerous. The solution lies in learning how to make your emotions work *for you* instead of against you.

The two-year-old gets angry because his mechanical dump-truck won't work properly. He throws it on the floor and smashes it. This is the infantile way of using anger—to hurt or destroy something. Carried over into adult life, it can cause much unhappiness and distress.



The child smashes things, while the mature person puts his anger to work.



But if the same two-year-old grows up emotionally as well as physically, he learns to utilize his anger more constructively by the time he is in his teens. He may still become infuriated because of some frustrating situation. But now, instead of losing his head and throwing things around, he works off his rage by utilizing the energy it provides to get something useful done. Maybe he goes out and plays a fast set of tennis. Or he writes a hot editorial for the school paper on the recent wave of cheating, which results in the student council going into action on the problem. He has put his anger to work for him.

The trick is to channel all those strong emotions of yours into activities that will relieve your feelings and yet won't be harmful to you or others.

### **Making a weakness into an asset**

Gail's super-sensitivity had been keeping her from enjoying life. Half the time she was sulky or depressed, nursing hurt feelings. Her teacher hadn't been fair; Mom didn't understand; Doris hadn't invited her to a party. And so on.

Her teacher in a human-relations class at school happened to furnish the clue that showed Gail how to cope with her problem. He mentioned that in our relations with others we need to be *more* sensitive to *their* feelings.

"Sensitive!" thought Gail. "That's me all over. Mom says I'm too thin-skinned. Maybe it's really a good quality that I've been using in the wrong way. I think I'll try being more sensitive to other people's feelings for a change."

That evening at dinner Gail noticed that her mother looked very tired. She offered to wash the dishes so that Mom could rest. The warm feeling that spread through her as she tackled the stack of dirty dishes came as a pleasant surprise.

Another time when her friend Doris snarled at her without reason, Gail refused to let it get her down. Instead she thought, "Something must be bothering Doris today. She doesn't usually act like this." Gail drew Doris out by asking her some questions about her social life. Soon Doris was telling Gail about the fight she had had with her current boyfriend. After they talked for a while Gail was able to cheer up her friend. The result was a closer friendship.

Gail gradually learned to be grateful for her sensitivity. By using it in the right way, she found that it made her a happier individual. It

gave her the ability to put herself in another person's place and appreciate his difficulties.

### **Will power isn't enough**

Perhaps you have resolved a dozen times to correct certain faults or failings. You're shy and you promise yourself that you won't be. Or you feel less talented than other people and make up your mind that you're going to get over your silliness about taking a back seat when parts are being given out for the school play. But in spite of all your good resolutions, you find yourself slipping back into the same old ways.

Unfortunately, will power isn't always enough. If it were, we'd have few serious problems. Most people honestly want to be and do better. What causes the trouble isn't lack of good intentions. It is lack of understanding of our real selves and why we behave as we do. Only as you come to understand yourself *the way you are*, can you develop gradually into the kind of person *you want to be*.

### **The past in the present**

It will help a great deal if you try to connect your present difficulties with past experiences. Let's say that you feel very unsure of yourself. In class you hesitate to put up your hand even when you know the right answer. You're afraid to phone a girl for a date because she might say *no*. Why are you so unsure of your abilities and your likableness? Can you trace these feelings back, perhaps, to when you were much younger? It may be that you used to be unfavorably compared to a brother or sister. This made you feel inadequate and inferior. But you are older now and can afford to laugh at your childish jealousy. You have your own special abilities and capacities in which you can excel. By understanding the reasons for your lack of confidence in yourself, you will be able to face them realistically and do something about solving the problem.

Laura would get into a panic every time a school dance came up. She was afraid to go, and was miserable all evening when she did push herself into attending. More and more she drew into herself, using illness as an excuse for refusing invitations to dances. She complained that she was tired all the time, although the doctor could find no physical cause for her fatigue.

Then one night her cousin Ed, whom she hadn't seen in years, arrived for a visit. At dinner he said to her, "Gee, you're pretty now, Laura. I'll bet you don't have to wear a red dress to dances any longer to trap partners."



At this innocent remark Laura burst into tears and left the table. Ed's words had brought back a painful memory which she had forced herself to forget. At seven she had been quite fat and awkward, and she wore braces on her teeth. At dancing school, no boys raced to choose her for a partner. One day her mother said to Ed's mother, when she was driving the children to class, "I'll have to put a red dress on her to make any of them notice her. She's so plain and clumsy."



Laura's fear of dances stemmed from unhappy memories of dancing school.

Once Laura realized that this childish hurt and shame were responsible for her present fear of dances, she was able to face her problem realistically. The situation had changed, for now she wasn't an awkward little girl, except when faced with a dance. When Laura understood this, she was able to get rid of the 7-year-old child permanently.

### Alibis

Laura's fatigue was an alibi for her real motive in staying home and refusing invitations. She really believed that she was too exhausted to go out and have fun. This is known as *rationalization*.

You are rationalizing when you justify what you think, feel, or do by advancing some "noble" reason that isn't really true. For instance, Bob has a bad headache every time he isn't prepared for an exam that's coming up at school. The headaches are real, and Bob doesn't know the reason for them because he won't let himself discover the truth. Mildred

complains that the hotel didn't hire her the second summer because the manager was giving all the jobs to his relatives. By rationalizing in this way she manages to escape facing the fact that she was an inefficient waitress who failed to do her job well.

When you alibi in this way you are fooling yourself. How can you deal realistically with your true motives unless you know what they are? The more honest you can be with yourself about why you act the way you do, the better you can direct your own life. Try to uncover your real motives and understand them better.

### Happy days ahead

Make the most of your teens to develop effective habits of living and working with others. By wise direction of your emotions you can learn to accomplish things the smooth way that is so satisfying. Instead of bewailing your past mistakes, profit by them. Use them as a clue to understanding the why's of your behavior.

No one is perfect, so don't be too harsh with yourself. But remember that you are changing all the time, and it can be for the better. The teens are a wonderful time because you haven't quite "jelled" yet. You still have the finishing touches to give your personality. If you aren't entirely satisfied with yourself there is still time to alter and improve and polish your attitudes and actions.

Emotional maturity is your goal. And good behavior is essentially maturity in everyday practice. It is choosing the considered, thoughtful, self-controlled, and reasonable way of thinking, feeling, and acting.

The rewards are great. They bring the respect, admiration, and love of others. They enable you to like yourself better. And they assure your getting things done in the world, for the mature person makes a contribution to life—he leaves it a little better than he found it!





## For more information . . .

The following reading materials will help to supplement the information in this booklet. Ask your counselor or librarian if they are available in your school or public library.

**Achieving Maturity.** *Jane Warters.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1949. An interesting, readable discussion of the qualities that go to make up a mature person.

**Dating Days.** *Lester A. Kirkendall and Ruth Farnham Osborne.* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949. Here is helpful information on how to succeed in boy-girl friendships. Many dating problems are also discussed in this booklet.

**Getting Along with Others.** *Helen Shacter.* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1949. A booklet designed to help young people get along successfully in their relations with others.

**How Personalities Grow.** *Helen Shacter.* Bloomington, Ill.: McKnight and McKnight, 1949. This book can serve as a guide to understanding your own personality development.

**How to Live with Parents.** *Gladys Gardner Jenkins and Joy Neuman.* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1948. This booklet will give you a better understanding of the problems that arise in family life and how to handle them successfully.

**How to Solve Your Problems.** *Robert H. Seashore and A. C. Van Dusen.* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1950. In this booklet the authors describe a six-step method of problem solving that you can use to meet many difficulties.

**Meeting Difficulties.** The Junior Citizen Series. *William C. Trow, Rosalind M. Zapf, and Harry C. McKown.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1951. This booklet shows how you can most successfully get what you want by behaving in acceptable ways.

**Personal Adjustment, Marriage and Family Living.** *Judson T. Landis and Mary G. Landis.* New York: Prentice-Hall, 1950. Here are discussions of dating, parents' attitudes, preparing for marriage, and many other topics of interest.

**Personal Problems.** Rev. ed. *John B. Geisel.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1949. Some of the topics included in this book are knowing more about yourself, getting along with others, and making your way in the world.

**Personal Problems of Everyday Life.** *L. E. Travis and D. Baruch.* New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1941. A readable book on common problems that face everyone.

**Psychology for Living.** *Herbert Sorenson and Marguerite Malm.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1948. This book will give you help not only with everyday problems, but also with special doubts, fears, and feelings of insecurity.

**Teens . . . How to Meet Your Problems.** *John and Dorathea Crawford.* New York: Women's Press, 1951. Concrete help on various problems regarding family, friends, education, and personality that trouble young people.

**Time Out for Youth.** *Arthur S. Gregor.* New York: Macmillan, 1951. Here are many suggestions for solving the large and small problems that arise in getting along with your family and friends, achieving popularity, and learning to study.

**Understanding Yourself.** *William C. Menninger, M.D.* Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1948. How well you understand yourself plays an important part in the way you meet your problems. This booklet can help you learn how you are made psychologically, what your emotions and behavior mean, how to get help if you have a really serious problem, and how to keep well emotionally.

**Ways to Improve Your Personality.** *Virginia Bailard and Ruth Strang.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1951. This book gives helpful information on how to develop desirable personality traits through meeting everyday problems successfully.

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